

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 116934

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINS CS

SUBJECT: CONTINUED TALK OF A COUP

FOR AMBASSADOR FROM ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROGERS

1. I AM DISTURBED BY THE CONTENTS OF SAN JOSE 1948 AND PREVIOUS MESSAGES ON THE POSSIBILITY OF THE UPSET OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT. THIS WOULD BE AN UNFORTUNATE SETBACK FOR COSTA RICA AND FOR THE IMAGE OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS. I WONDER IF THERE IS NOT SOMETHING WE COULD OR SHOULD DO TO PREVENT THIS UNFORTUNATE OCCURRENCE

2. I RECOGNIZE THAT SUCH AN IMPACT WOULD NOT SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT ANY VITAL U.S. NATIONAL INTEREST. LIKEWISE I WOULD WANT TO AVOID ANY MOVE THAT COULD BE SEEN AS BLATANT USG INTRUSION INTO INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN COSTA RICA. NEVERTHELESS, I DO THINK IT IS IMPORTANT FOR US NOT TO STAND IDLY BY.

3. SINCE THE MOTIVATING FORCE BEHIND SUCH A MOVE IS PEPE

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FIGUERES, I WONDER HOW WE MIGHT BEST DISSUADE HIM. I AM

FULLY AWARE OF HIS VENALITY, BUT I BELIEVE THAT VANITY IS ALSO OF CONSIDERABLE WEIGHT IN HIS PERSONALITY. WOULD AN APPEAL TO HIM AS THE COUNTRY'S ELDER STATESMAN BE OF ANY USE? A CLEAR MESSAGE TO PEPE INDICATING THAT A DISRUPTION OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD ERASE THE UNIQUE BASIS OF COSTA RICA'S INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP WHICH HAS BEEN SO CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH HIS NAME AND LEADERSHIP OVER THE PAST 27 YEARS, MIGHT HAVE SOME EFFECT. IT COULD ALSO BE POINTED OUT THAT SUCH AN IMPORTANT EVENT COULD SERIOUSLY ERODE THE REMARKABLY WARM AND ENDURING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND COSTA RICA WHICH IS ALSO ASSOCIATED WITH HIS NAME. OR, WE COULD TAKE A FIRMER LINE AND WARN HIM THAT THE USG WOULD TAKE A VERY DIM VIEW OF ANY SUCH MOVE.

4. THIS MIGHT BE DONE EITHER (A) BY YOU ON AN UNOFFICIAL BASIS, OR (B) BY ONE OF THE MANY PEOPLE IN THE U.S. WHO HAVE LONG-STANDING PERSONAL FRIENDSHIPS WITH PEPE (E.G., BOB WOODWARD, BEN STEPHANSKY, RAY TELLES, JACK VAUGHN, ETC.).

5. ANOTHER APPROACH MIGHT BE TO DEMONSTRATE STRONG SUPPORT AND APPRECIATION OF ODUBER'S POSITION AND ROLE AS THE LEADER OF ONE OF THE AREA'S FEW TRUE DEMOCRACIES. THIS COULD BE DONE BY A VISIT FROM A MAJOR U.S. POLITICAL FIGURE SUCH AS THE SECRETARY OR SENATOR KENNEDY. THIS MIGHT ALSO BE COMBINED AND ORCHESTRATED WITH THE EARLIER SUGGESTION FOR A DOUBLE-BARRELLED EFFECT.

6. I WOULD LIKE YOUR REACTION TO THESE SUGGESTIONS AND PARTICULARLY YOUR JUDGMENT AS TO THE EFFICACY AND/OR CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH AN APPROACH. I WOULD ALSO APPRECIATE ANY OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE CONCERNING USG POSTURE IN THIS SITUATION. INGERSOLL

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